

# A STUDY ON ABILITY IN USING ACADEMIC WORDS IN WRITING REPORT TEXT BY SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF SMAN 9 PEKANBARU

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**Abstract:** *The aims of this study was to find out (1) the percentage of academic words being used in writing report text by second year students at SMAN 9 Pekanbaru and (2) the level of the academic words being used in writing report text by second year students at SMAN 9 Pekanbaru. This study is a descriptive research by using cluster model sampling to choose the sample that was 30 students of eleventh science 5 class. The analysis was based on Academic Word List (AWL) Highlighter classified into 10 levels of frequency, from the highest (level 1) to the lowest (level 10). From the 30 written texts, it was found the most academic words used is in level 7 (22 of 64 words or 34,37%) and the least are level 3 and level 6 (3 words of 64 or 4,68%). And based on number of students, there are 4 of 30 (13%) students that do not use any academic words in their writing. Last, based on part of speech, the most part of speech that used is verb part of speech (39 of 64 or 61,29%) and the lowest one is adverb part of speech (1 of 64 or 1,56%). It can be concluded that the students of second year of SMAN 9 Pekanbaru has been used academic words in their writing although in a low level frequency (level 7). Therefore, it is expected for teachers to more remind the students about academic words, even for the highlevel and futur researchers to conduct similar research for improving the ability of using academic words of students.*

**Keywords :** *Writing, academic words, Report text*

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persentasi penggunaan kata-kata akademik dalam menulis teks Report oleh siswa tingkat dua di SMAN 9 Pekanbaru dan level kata-kata akademik yang digunakan dalam menulis teks Report oleh siswa tingkat dua di SMAN 9 Pekanbaru. Jenis penelitian ini adalah deskriptif dengan menggunakan metode pengambilan sampel Cluster untuk memilih kelas sampel dan yang terpilih adalah 30 orang siswa kelas XI IPA 5. Analisis penelitian ini berdasarkan aplikasi list kata-kata akademik (*Academic Word List* ) yang diklasifikasikan kedalam 10 level frekuensi dari yang tertinggi level 1 dan yang terendah frekuensinya adalah level 10. Dari 30 tulisan teks Report, ditemukan level kata-kata akademik yang paling banyak digunakan adalah level 7 (22 dari 64 kata yang dipakai atau 34,37%) dan yang terendah adalah level 3 dan 6 ( 3 dari 64 kata yang dipakai atau 4,68%). Dan berdasarkan jumlah siswa 30 orang, ditemukan hanya 4 orang yang tidak menggunakan kata-kata akademik (4 dari 30 atau 13%). Terakhir, berdasarkan penggolongan jenis kata, kata yang paling banyak digunakan adalah kata kerja (39 dari 64 atau 61,29%) dan kata yang paling sedikit digunakan adalah kata keterangan (1 dari 64 atau 1,56%). Berdasarkan penelitian tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa siswa tingkat dua di SMAN 9 Pekanbaru telah dapat menggunakan kata-kata akademik meskipun dalam level frekuensi yang rendah (level 7). Oleh karena itu, sangat diharapkan kepada guru-guru agar dapat mengingatkan kembali siswa siswi nya agar menggunakan kata-kata akademik yang berlevel tinggi dan peneliti selanjutnya agar dapat melakukan penelitian upaya meningkatkan kemampuan siswa siswi dalam menggunakan kata-kata akademik yang berlevel tinggi.

**Kata Kunci : Menulis, Kata-kata akademik, Teks Report**

## INTRODUCTION

Based on curriculum of 2006, senior high school students are designed to comprehend the four competencies of English, namely Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Those four kind of English competencies are expected to be comprehended. Each competency is related each others. Just like Speaking has relation to Listening competence, and Writing is also related to Reading competence. It should be done by teachers to help students to learn the ways to comprehend those four language competencies. In this curriculum, students are given understanding and comprehension of the 13 types of text. In which the students are taught around 4 kind of texts in each semester. In this semester, second year senior high school students learn Report, Narrative, Analytical exposition, and Spoof text. These kind of text are supposed to help students in comprehending language proficiency.

One of the way to comprehend those language competencies is writing. Writing is an un-separated part of people life. (Conclin 1991) in Yunita Khairani (2012) states that writing is a way of communication and course communicates all the time, mainly talking to other people. It is a way to express feelings, hopes, dreams, and joys as well as fears, angers, and frustrations. Writing is also used to express ideas, plans, recommendations, values, and commitments.

In writing activities, students are making sentences to become a text. Text is an essential medium to introduce words to students, as they can see the function of word in that text. Basically, a text contains various words, both academic and non academic words. Therefore, students can learn both academic words and non academic words at the same time. As one of skills that should be comprehended by students, writing should provide clear messages with good academic words.

Academic words are part of academic language that characterized by complex syntax, academic vocabulary, and a complex discourse style. It has been assumed that academic language can be analyzed and taught directly, but this is an empirical question, open to investigation. The term academic language often appears in the literature in discussions of linguistic registers. Ehlers-Zavala in Baumann, et al., (2010) described academic language as “a specific register...that students are expected to use in school subjects” (Similarly, Scott, et al., in Baumann, et al., 2010) described academic language as “a register of English that has distinctive lexical, morphological, syntactic, and stylistic features”. Therefore, academic words should be comprehended by the students to make them understand about what they are learning at the present and for future study.

Senior high school students use academic words to write essays, papers, and also do presentations. In fact, when the researcher asked some senior high school students about academic words through informal observation, they have ever heard and learned at class. However they are not concern specifically about level of academic word and what number of academic words that they have used for sure . The teacher added she has taught clearly about words. It can be implied that academic words have taught in that school. The students are only needed to remind what level and what number of the academic words that they should use.

As former researcher, Muryanti (2014), found in her research that report text in second year senior high school contained academic words belong to the highest frequency level. It implies that students should be able to use it. Report text is as informational text that has technical term expected to use academic words in that writing.

However, writing not only covers about words, but also structures, meaning, and content, but the researcher will only focus on the academic words. This is because all things in academic language starts from the existence of academic words itself. For that reason, the researcher would like to find out whether or not the students have been used academic words in their writing especially for report text by conducting A Study on Ability in Using Academic Words in Writing Report Text by Second Year Students of SMAN 9 Pekanbaru.

## **ACADEMIC WORDS**

### **1. The Nature of Academic Words**

Gottlieb, et.al. (2006) with TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) define academic language as language that is “used to acquire a new or deeper understanding of content related to the core curriculum areas and communicate that understanding to others; it is the language that students must use to effectively participate in the classroom environment” (Marlyn Peebles, et.al., 2010). Grigorenko (2015) added discussions of academic language refer to content vocabulary, linguistic registers, mainstream linguistic conventions, textual and literary features among other constructs as components of academic language. Coxhead (2000) referred to these words as academic words and defined them as “lexical items that occur frequently and uniformly across a wide range of academic material”. In conclusion, academic language is a language used in academic environment that is characterized by complex syntax, academic vocabulary, and a complex discourse style.

### **2. The Characteristics of Academic Words**

Beck and McKeown (1988) characterized words into three tiers, namely Tier one word (basic word that commonly appear in spoken language), Tier two word (High frequency words used by mature language users accros several content areas) and Tier three word (words that are not frequently used except in specific content areas or domains). Beck and McKeown explained that Tier two words are far more likely to appear in written text than in speech. They appear in all sort of text : informational text (words such as vary, accumulate, formulate), technical texts (calibrate, item), and literary text (dignified, faltered). Because tier two words are found across many types of texts, they are highly generalizable.

In short, the academic words have this following criteria :

- a) It is likely to appear across subjects
- b) It is vital for comprehending academic text
- c) It helps students to express their academic understanding
- d) It is essential for participation in academic discussion and writing, and
- e) It is not typically used by students without explicit instruction.

### **3. The Classification of Academic Words**

#### **a. Based on Levels of Academic Words**

Coxhead (2000) assembled a corpus of 3.5 million running words from college-level texts (e.g., journal articles, book chapters, full books) and listed 570 word families after excluded those words that were among the most frequent 2,000 English words and included words that occurred at least 100 times in the 3.5 million running words and occurred in 15 or more of the 28 content areas sampled. The 570 word families grouped into 10 frequency blocks of about 60 words each in Academic Word List, except in ten level which consist of 30 words. Level 1 is the highest level frequency and the level 10 is the lowest one.

#### **b. Based on Parts of Speech**

Academic words are part of English vocabulary. Vocabulary that consists of the words we understand when we hear or read them (receptive vocabulary) and words we speak or write (expressive vocabulary), (Hutton, 2008). They can be classified into all categories. In general, according to Eckersley (1966) words can be classified into 8 categories, namely Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Preposition, Conjunction, and Interjection.

According to Beck and McKeown (1988) that classified three tier words, academic words (tier two words) only classified into four parts of speech namely noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. It can be seen from the Academic Word List (AWL) that the root of the words comes only from noun, verb, adjective, and adverb part of speech.

### **4. The Importance of Academic Words**

Since academic words are part of academic language. The reason for teaching academic language is simple: Students will struggle to learn from what they have read if they have not understood the language of the text. Understanding vocabulary is important because the relationships between vocabulary knowledge and comprehension, and language proficiency and reading growth, are well established in the literature. Research has shown a strong and consistent predictive relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension across grade levels . (Alexander and Jetton, 2000; Nagy, 2005).

## **REPORT TEXT**

### **1. The Nature of Report Text**

Report Text is one of the 13 types of English texts (genres) that presents information about things like nature, animals, plants, products of human endeavor and social phenomena, as it is. Gerot and Wignell (1994) stated that report is a text which functions to describe the way things are, with reference to a range of natural, manmade and social phenomena in our environment.

## 2. The Generic Structure of Report Text

### a. General classification:

Stating classification of general aspect of thing; animal, public place, plant, etc which will be discussed in general.

### b. Description:

Describing the thing which will be discussed in detail; part per part , customs or deed for living creature and usage for materials

## 3. Language Feature of Report text

- 1) Using conditional logical connection; when, so, etc
- 2) Using simple present tense
- 3) Use of general nouns, eg hunting dogs, rather than particular nouns, eg our dog;
- 4) Use of Relating verbs to describe features, eg Molecules are tiny particles;
- 5) Some use of action verbs when describing behavior, eg Emus can not fly;
- 6) Use of timeless present tense to indicate usualness, eg Tropical cyclones always begin over the sea;
- 7) Use of technical terms, eg Isobars are lines drawn on a weather map;
- 8) Use of paragraphs with topic sentences to organise bundles of information; repeated naming of the topic as the beginning focus of the clause.

From the language features above, it is clear that report text is one of texts which contain academic words since it uses technical terms.

## WRITING

Writing is various stages (planning, drafting, editing, etc) that researchers go through in a variety of sequences in order to compose written text (Harmer 2007). Tompkins (2010) added that as students prepare to write, they need to think about the purpose of their writing: whether they are writing to entertain, to inform, or to persuade. Setting the purpose for writing is just as important as setting the purpose for reading, because purpose influences decisions students make about form. One of the most important considerations is the genre or form the writing. In this study, the genre of writing is expository writing which the example is Report.

## Research Methodology

This research was conducted on Thursday, 9 October 2015 in SMAN 9 Pekanbaru on jalan Semeru nomor 12, Pekanbaru. This study is descriptive research. According to Williams (2007), descriptive research is research design used to examine the situation involving identification of attributes of a particular phenomenon based on an observational basis. Therefore, the researcher uses this research design in conducting this study.

The population of this research is all science students for second year at SMAN 9 Pekanbaru. The number of population is 180 students; in 6 classes (XI Science 1, XI

Science 2, XI Science 3, XI Science 4, XI Science 5, XI Science 6). The class chosen was XI Science 5 by using cluster model sampling.

The data taken in this research is academic words used in writing of report text. In which the instruments are 5 topics about animal. To collect the data for this research, it uses writing test. The data is about academic words that contained in writing report text by second year students of SMAN 9 Pekanbaru for more analysis. To identify the data, the researcher supported by Academic Word list (AWL) Highlighter that developed by Averil Coxhead (2000), University of Nottingham. In which it has 10 levels of academic words.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used content analysis which consists of six steps (Gall, 2005) :

a) Preparing the database

After finishing to take sample by sampling process, the data are ready to be analyzed. Then the data was analysed by assisting with Academic Word List (AWL) highlighter. In this process, the data taken was formed in a word (academic word) that noticed by that software.

b) Sequencing the data

After the noticed words were identified, they was divided based on the frequency level. According to Coxhead (2000), in which the frequency of academic word is divided into 10 levels. Level 1 is for the highest frequent words, while the level 10 is for lowest ones.

c) Grouping the data into categories

The data was classified into categories. Even though the noticed data have been sequenced systematically, it still needs to be grouped in order to clearly distinguish it from other levels. Moreover, it is also helpful for researcher in calculating the data which share the same category. Therefore the data was grouped based on its level.

d) Coding each data

The coding process means give special notice for the data that still relates to the frequency level of academic words found. Each word was coded based on the categories they were in. For example, the words that shared the category of level 1 will be labeled as 1, and so forth.

e) Cumulating all the coded data

The coded data was cumulated. This process was done to know how many academic words occur in the sample in general. Also, it helped researcher to identify the number of academic words in particular level occur in each text sample. To support the cumulating, the data was presented in percentage. According to Hatch and Farhady (1982) to obtain the percentage, we can divide the F of the level that we want to check by the sum of frequencies (N) and multiply by 100%. It is formulated as follow :

$$P = F/N \times 100\%$$

In this study, F is the number of academic words in particular level that we want to count, and N is the total number of academic words that are obtained.

f) Generating construct that emerge from categories

To make the all data can give a meaningful meaning towards the study. Thus, by previous five steps, we can construct the next step, which is the viewpoint of academic words existence in writing report text that written by

second year senior high school students by classified into three explanations ; based on levels of academic words, distribution of academic words in each texts, and based on part of speech.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. Academic words based on levels

The sample of population was 30 students. The sample was taken based on cluster sampling method where choosing the class by doing lottery. There are 6 eleventh science classes, therefore in each lottery number put one class. In the end, the researcher chose one and that was XI Science 5. The object of research was report text written by students. Based on curriculum of 2006, Report text is one of 4 kind of texts learned by eleventh student in this semester. These report texts were then compared to AWL (Academic Word List) Highlighter. The result of the check was presented in form of words classified on each level-based word classification. Therefore, the result will be presented in three classifications namely the level, each texts, and the part of speech.

Table 4.1 Academic words based on levels

Level of Academic words	Number	Percentage
1	11	17,18%
2	10	15,62%
3	3	4,68%
4	4	6,25%
6	3	4,68%
7	22	34,37%
9	12	18,75%
Total	64	100%

Based on the table above we can see that from all academic words used, the most used are level 7, the leasts are level 3 and level 6. The number of academic words used for level 1 is 11 words (17,18%), level 2 is 9 words (15,62%), level 3 is 3 words (4,68%), level 4 is 4 words (6,25%), level 6 is 3 words (4,68%), level 7 is 22 words (34,37%) and level 9 is 11 words (18,75%).

### 2. Academic words in each texts

There are 30 report texts that written by the students. Each text has different level of academic words. Where there are some texts that consist several academic words in one text, but in contras there are texts that do not have any academic words. Also, some texts have different part of speech, such as in level 1, 2, 4 and 7. While the others like level 4, 6 and 9 only have one part of speech. The result counted by percentage formula which is the number of academic words in each text as F and the total number of academic words in the whole texts as N.



Table 4.9 Distribution of Academic words in each texts

Text	Number	Percentage
1	1	1,56%
2	1	1,56%
3	-	-
4	-	-
5	1	1,56%
6	4	6,25%
7	1	1,56%
8	3	4,68%
9	1	1,56%
10	2	3,12%
11	2	3,12%
12	6	9,37%
13	6	9,37%
14	-	-
15	3	4,68%
16	3	4,68%
17	1	1,56%
18	1	1,56%
19	1	1,56%
20	3	4,68%
21	1	1,56%
22	1	1,56%
23	2	3,12%
24	1	1,56%
25	1	1,56%
26	3	4,68%
27	-	-
28	3	4,68%
29	9	14,06%
30	2	3,12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100 %</b>

### 3. Academic words based on part of speech

Based on Eckersle's 1966 statement that words can be classified into 8 part of speech. They are noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. The first four can be classified as content words, while the next part of speech are as empty words. In this case, academic words were found as content words in which as noun, verb, adjective, adverb. The academic words that was found categorized into each level and part of speech. For the part of speech, it can be seen from this 4. 61 table below. For the percentage, it was counted by percentage formula,

in which the number of words in particular part of speech as F and the total number of academic words in this case as N.

Table 4.61 Academic words based on part of speech

<b>Part of Speech</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Noun	17	25,80%
Verb	39	61,29%
Adjective	9	14,51%
Adverb	1	1,61%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100 %</b>

From that table, it can be seen that the most used words belong to verb part of speech (39 of 64 or 61,29%). Then followed by the second most used words is noun part of speech (17 of 64 or 25,80%), the third frequently most used is adjective which 9 of 64 or 14,51%. And the last most used word is adverb which 1 of 64 or 1,61%.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Conclusions

After conducting research entitled “A study on ability in using academic words in writing report text by second year students of SMAN 9 Pekanbaru”, some conclusions can be taken. As the research finding shows that based on level of academic words, the most academic words used is in level 7 (22 of 64 words or 34,37%). Based on part of speech, the most part of speech that used is verb part of speech (39 of 64 or 61,29%). And based on number of students, there are 4 of 30 (13%) students that do not use any academic words in their writing. In answering the formulation of the problems, the first answer is that the academic words used in writing report text by second year senior high school students are 64 words. And the second one, the most academic words used is level 7.

### 2. Recommendation

Based on the research finding, it is clear that in report text that has technical terms, the students has been used academic words. Although, this only refers to one type of text but it can be drawn as a basic of information that students used academic words although in a low level. Therefore, the teacher is expected to more remind the students about academic words, even for the highlevel. Besides, the researcher also suggested to other researcher to conduct similar research with other kind of text and even how to improve academic words knowlegde as part of academic language.

The application for these recommendations are expected to help researcher, teacher, students and especially for English students or interested students to know more about existence and importance of academic words as part of academic language that we use in academic content area.

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